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Another Plague Of British Moles?

In the postwar era, spy scandals have become as English as cricket. In 1951, British diplomats Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean defected to Moscow on the eve of their exposure as Soviet agents. They were joined in 1963 by Kim Philby, a senior intelligence officer. In 1979 Queen Elizabeth's onetime art adviser, Sir Anthony Blunt, was revealed as a Soviet spy and stripped of his knighthood. Now come reports of the highest-ranking "mole" of all. In a new book, author Chapman Pincher says British intelligence officials suspected the late Sir Roger Hollis, director of M.I.5, the counterespionage service, of having worked for the Kremlin. Addressing the House of Commons last week, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said Hollis had indeed been investigated twice, but had been cleared of spy charges both times. And NEWSWEEK learned that there were some compelling reasons for discounting the charges against Hollis.

As Pincher tells it, Hollis, who led M.I.5 from 1956 until his retirement in 1965, became the focus of official suspicion in the early 1960s. His intelligence colleagues detected an alarming series of Soviet moves that could only be explained by the continuing presence of a top-level Moscow agent in the British service. Some of Hollis's own actions seemed curious, to say the least. Although he knew in 1963 that call girl Christine Keeler's Soviet lover, Capt. Yevgeny Ivanov, was a senior Kremlin spy, Hollis did nothing to warn off British War Minister John Profumo, who also was having an affair with Keeler. A year later, when Anthony Blunt was first being interrogated about alleged spy activities, Hollis suspended his investigating officer for two weeks—perhaps providing Blunt with time to consult the Soviets about a convincing defense.

Charges: Pincher's book, "Their Trade Is Treachery," levels charges at other once-prominent figures. He writes that the late Tom Driberg, chairman of the Labor Party from 1957 to 1958, spied simultaneously for Britain, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia and that Australian Charles Ellis, a top aide to Sir William Stephenson, the famed wartime British agent code-named

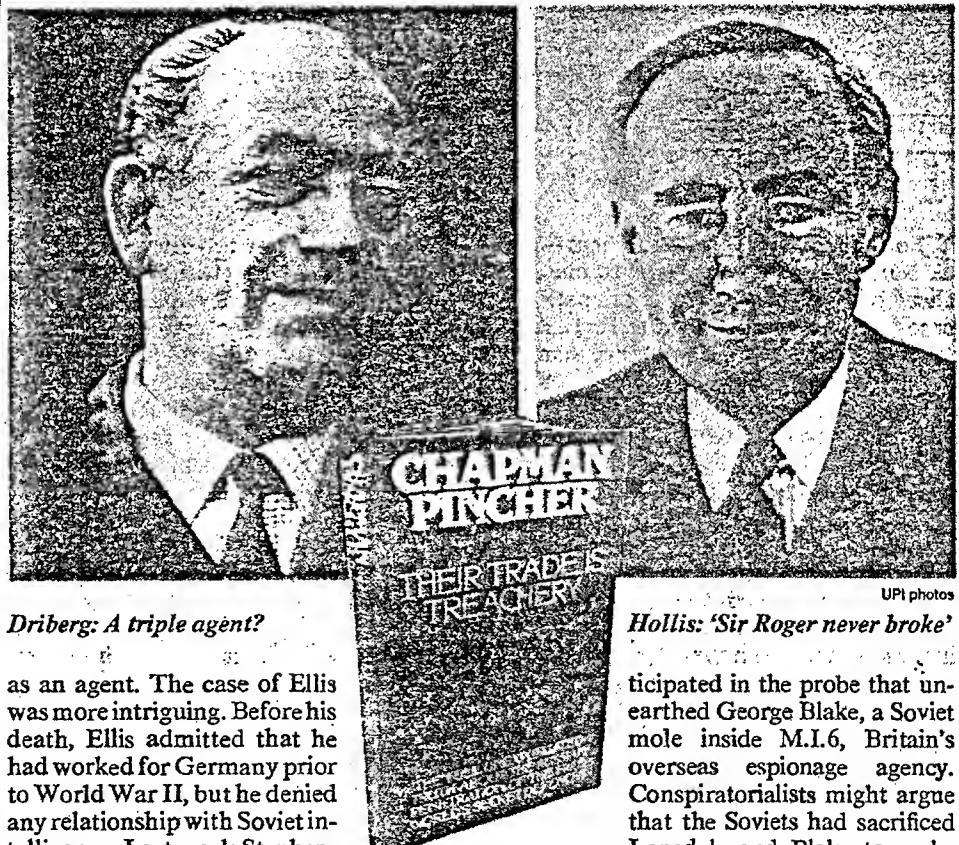
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"Intrepid," had worked for the Nazis, then for the Soviets.

Pincher admits that when British intelligence men finally confronted Hollis with their suspicions, "Sir Roger never broke." And Thatcher, in her Commons statement, revealed that investigations in 1970 and 1974 produced no evidence to incriminate Hollis; every lead, she said, also could have pointed to Philby or Blunt. She said that Pincher's book contained no significant new information and some that was "inaccurate or distorted." She did not deal with the charges against Driberg and Ellis. Driberg was an admitted homosexual (Winston Churchill once called him "a man who shamed sodomy"); intelligence sources doubt that he knew any real secrets and suggest that his unstable character would have made him next to worthless

in the cable indicated that a top Soviet agent in London, code-named "Stanley," already knew about the Guzenko crisis and was not in Britain at the time. Intelligence sources say only three men fit that description—Philby, Blunt and Hollis. As recently as 1977, Britain asked the United States to review the V traffic again, to try to determine which one was Stanley.

Missile Secrets: Many members of the American intelligence community are reluctant to conclude that Hollis was Stanley. During Hollis's tenure as head of M.I.5, Soviet intelligence suffered a series of disasters in Britain, all of which he could have prevented if he had so desired. Hollis personally directed the roundup of a Soviet spy ring inside the British Admiralty that included the valuable agent Konon Molody—cover name Gordon Lonsdale. He par-



Driberg: A triple agent?

as an agent. The case of Ellis was more intriguing. Before his death, Ellis admitted that he had worked for Germany prior to World War II, but he denied any relationship with Soviet intelligence. Last week Stephenson rejected the Soviet-spy charge, calling Ellis "one of the very few you could be certain about."

American intelligence has worked closely with the British in their investigations. The primary U.S. contribution centers on clues contained in what is known as the "V traffic"—coded, secret cables sent by the Soviet KGB in the 1940s. After World War II, the same team of U.S. codebreakers who had cracked Japan's code before Pearl Harbor turned to the Soviet system and broke it, too. Bit by bit, the backlog of intercepted KGB messages began to make sense. One cable, dated September 1945, spoke of a grave problem just encountered

Hollis: Sir Roger never broke'

ticipated in the probe that unearthed George Blake, a Soviet mole inside M.I.6, Britain's overseas espionage agency. Conspiratorialists might argue that the Soviets had sacrificed Lonsdale and Blake to make

Hollis look good in British eyes. But Hollis was in on another intelligence operation that was a major disaster for the Kremlin. For a year and a half, Russian Col. Oleg Penkovsky gave British and American intelligence 10,000 pages of top-secret documents on Soviet missiles. If Hollis had been an agent, he would have warned the Russians.

In the spy game, however, nothing is certain. Thatcher said she believed that M.I.5 and M.I.6 are currently mole-free—but just to be sure, she announced the appointment of a high-level commission to review British government security procedures. That investigation may clear the air—unless it turns up another mole in the